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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 44th MEETING

Chairman: Miss DIOP (Senegal)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of Mr. Piriz-Ballon (Uruguay), Miss Diop (Senegal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(b) FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/47/19 and Add.1, A/47/395)

1. Mr. RAMADAN (Egypt) said that his country attached great importance to food and agricultural issues and pointed out that the volume of world food and agricultural production had fallen in 1991 for the first time since 1983.

2. The majority of developing countries depended on food imports to satisfy their needs ($61.2 million in 1990) and at the same time their exports were primarily tropical agricultural products and raw materials.

3. Moreover, the cereal stocks of the developed countries were diminishing dramatically, which affected food aid prospects. Nevertheless, his delegation believed that food aid could not provide a lasting solution or be the sole way of handling the problem. It was a matter of concern that the food supply situation had worsened in many countries since the World Food Conference had been held in 1974. At a time when it should be helping the developing countries to develop their agricultural sector, the international community had cut back on external assistance to agriculture. Providing a stimulus to agricultural production would create a basis for the industrialization and diversification of economic structure, and the agro-industrial sector was vital for economic growth and development. In that context, the importance of scientific and technological research must be stressed, as well as the resulting transfer of technology to the developing countries in the field of agriculture.

4. His delegation paid tribute to the four organs within the United Nations that were dealing with food and agriculture: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); the World Food Programme (WFP); and the World Food Council (WFC).

5. The latter, being the highest political body dealing with food and agricultural matters, had been carrying out an important role in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. As a member of the Council, his delegation believed that it should be restructured in order to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency.

6. Mr. MURIITHI (Kenya) recalled that the World Food Council at its eighteenth session (Nairobi, June 1991) had made a number of recommendations relating to its future mandate and the alleviation of hunger and malnutrition in the world. When it had been established in 1974, the Council had been given the mandate to coordinate the activities of bodies like FAO, WFP and

(Mr. Muriithi, Kenya)

IFAD in all aspects of food matters, and to serve as a ministerial forum for reviewing policy issues and recommending remedial measures.

7. The Council had been operating without difficulty, and meanwhile the United Nations had strengthened the various structures dealing with the world food situation, for example by creating the FAO World Food Security Committee and the WFP Committee on Food Aid Policies, which were to direct the world's attention to the problem of hunger and to issues of food security.

8. Many delegations had acknowledged during the current session that food security, hunger and malnutrition continued to be a global problem and that food shortages in parts of Africa due to drought, civil strife and flows of refugees and displaced persons had long-term implications. Such a situation called for rapid and coordinated relief assistance in the form of millions of tons of food.

9. At the current time, more than 550 million people were chronically hungry and the figure was expected to increase. The raison d'être of WFC was as acute currently as it had been 18 years earlier at the time of its establishment. The future role and the very existence of the Council must be seen in the context of global food security and the restructuring of the economic and social activities within the United Nations.

10. At its eighteenth session, the Council had set up a high-level Ad Hoc Committee to define its future role and make proposals on the matter. That Committee had not been able to complete its work in 1992, and his delegation supported the proposal to extend its mandate into 1993.

11. In conclusion, Kenya pointed out that the shortcomings attributed to WFC stemmed from the fact that it had never been provided with the authority or the financial means needed to discharge its responsibilities.

12. Mr. MINAGAWA (Japan) said, with reference to the future of the World Food Council, that unfortunately no real dialogue had taken place nor had there been any consensus as to the future during the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee set up to review the role and functioning of the Council and its place in the restructuring of the United Nations.

13. There was agreement as to the importance of world food security; the WFC objectives continued to be valid and should be pursued in the context of the reform of the United Nations system.

14. As one of the world's largest importers of food, Japan had supported the establishment of WFC, which since 1974 had devoted its efforts to promoting world food security. Nevertheless, the Council had failed to provide the political leadership and coordination that its founders had expected, because of the institutional deficiencies that afflicted it. With its small secretariat, it could not coordinate and monitor all areas of food security.

(Mr. Minagawa, Japan)

Its secretariat would be more efficient if it were part of a bigger organization.

15. Japan consequently made the following suggestions: the overall leadership role with respect to food policy should be performed by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council; coordination at the agency level should be entrusted to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), through a subcommittee to deal with food security matters; and the monitoring and analysis of the world food situation should be carried out in conjunction with the activities of other agencies with greater expertise, like FAO.

16. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said that his country sided with those which during the eighteenth session of the World Food Council had underscored the basic importance of national efforts to create food self-reliance, eliminate inequalities in commodity distribution and utilization, hasten the social and economic development of agricultural regions, and ensure food security for all.

17. It was also fundamentally important to improve the situation of trade in food products. The Uruguay Round talks were crucial to resolving issues in that area.

18. It was also important to step up national and regional research programmes in the area of biotechnology in combination with programmes for transfer of food production technology; and it was necessary to take new steps to coordinate emergency food aid in cases of civil disturbance, wars and natural disasters.

19. His delegation had listened with interest to the statement by the Vice-Chairman of the World Food Council, Mr. Lifanchikov, and noted the need for a fundamental restructuring of United Nations activities concerning food, including, inter alia, measures to avoid duplication and to reduce budgetary expenditure.

20. Mr. PALACIOS (Guatemala), speaking also on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, said that the world food situation was more serious and that world food security faced greater challenges than had been the case at the time of the World Food Conference in 1974. A serious political commitment to the elimination of hunger, going beyond mere rhetoric, was needed.

21. The six countries considered that, in spite of the criticisms levelled at WFC, the objectives that had led to its creation continued to be valid; that notwithstanding, it should still be revitalized with a view to increasing its efficiency. There was a need to improve the Council's work relations and cooperation with the United Nations bodies responsible for food, such as FAO, WFP and IFAD, in line with the ideas put forward at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the World Food Council, held on 14 and

(Mr. Palacios, Guatemala)

15 September 1992. It must not be forgotten that the Council had been constituted at ministerial level, thereby becoming a political organ.

22. In reply to accusations that WFC duplicated the work of other bodies, he stressed that the Council fulfilled a necessary role of coordination and formulation of policies on food issues.

23. In conclusion, he cited a sentence from the report of the Council on the work of its eighteenth session: "There can be no lasting peace or prosperity as long as millions of people continue to endure an existence defined by poverty and hunger".

24. Miss BELMAR (Mexico) said that at the current session of the General Assembly the need had arisen to review the functions of the Council and restructure it in order to strengthen its work and its leadership function. Mexico supported the restructuring process and reaffirmed the aims that had led to the creation of the Council, but maintained that it must increase its efficiency; in that regard, she referred to the proposals made at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Council. The main task was to strengthen the forums that benefited the developing countries in vital areas such as that of food.

25. Mr. LENZI (Italy) said that, as the host country of the World Food Council and of the other agricultural and food organizations of the United Nations system, Italy intended to make further contributions to the premises in which they operated. Italy would take responsibility for the logistical arrangements regarding the functioning of the Council secretariat, thereby increasing cost-effectiveness. New premises would be provided free of charge, so as to reduce the burden on the United Nations budget, and in future Rome would be the venue for ministerial meetings of the Council, which would be held every two years, as proposed at the eighteenth session.

AGENDA ITEM 89: TRAINING AND RESEARCH (continued)

(b) UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (continued) (A/C.2/47/L.43)

26. The CHAIRMAN, introducing the item and announcing the introduction of draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.43, said that Japan should be included in the list of sponsors.

27. Mr. MINAGAWA (Japan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.43, entitled "United Nations University", on behalf of its sponsors, and said that Canada, Colombia and Ghana had also asked to become sponsors.

28. The United Nations University, set up in December 1973, was an international community of scholars working in an environment of academic freedom. In the light of the unforeseen changes taking place around the world, Japan believed that the role played by the University had become even more important. It had now moved into its permanent headquarters, constructed

(Mr. Minagawa, Japan)

by the Government of Japan in the centre of metropolitan Tokyo. Now that it had a solid physical base for its operations, the University could further expand its activities, so as to achieve the lofty goals that the international community had set for it.

29. He went on to review the main points of draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.43. Inter alia, it welcomed the completion of the permanent headquarters building in Japan, requested the University to pursue its efforts to enhance its visibility and to continue its fund-raising efforts, and appealed to the international community to make voluntary contributions to the University. In concluding, he expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 144: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE TO ALLEVIATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR IN CROATIA AND TO FACILITATE ITS RECOVERY (continued) (A/C.2/47/L.41)

30. Mr. MOHAMMED (Bosnia and Herzegovina) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.41, on international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia and to facilitate its recovery, on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Armenia and Poland. In view of its urgency, it was to be hoped that the General Assembly would support the draft resolution.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

31. The CHAIRMAN said that the general discussion on all the agenda items allocated to the Second Committee have now been concluded.

32. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria), on behalf of the Group of African States, asked for the deadline for submission of draft resolutions concerning agenda item 12 (Report of the Economic and Social Council) to be extended, so as to allow for submission of a draft resolution on the Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

33. The CHAIRMAN announced that on Monday, 23 November, informal consultations chaired by Miss Diop (Senegal), Vice-Chairman, would be held on draft resolutions A/C.2/47/L.29, L.35, L.40, L.41, L.42 and L.43.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.